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Embassy of the United States of America

Buenos Aires, Argentina

September 30, 1994

RELEASED IN FULL

Ms. Kimberly Jessup
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Ms. Jessup:

This is in response to your letter of September 19 regarding the terrorist bombing of the Argentine Mutual Jewish Association building in Buenos Aires on July 18.

The Argentine government is continuing its effort to identify the perpetrators of the bombing of the Association building. Our government has provided specialized personnel and technical assistance to speed the process of identification and to press the search for any information that may lead to the perpetrators of this atrocious act. Israeli government experts have been on the scene since shortly after the explosion took place and have cooperated closely with the Argentine authorities.

Argentine officials have acted to identify the victims and turn over remains to loved ones as rapidly as possible. The force of the explosion was such, however, that many of the victims could not be identified until days or weeks following the blast. Autopsies were performed on the victims since Argentine law requires that autopsies be performed in the case of a presumed homicide. This is a practice observed in most jurisdictions in the United States. As of this date all remains have been examined and returned to families where identities have been established. Our understanding is that the identified victims of the attack number 83 people. Despite the best efforts of Argentine, U.S. and Israeli investigators, there are still remains of victims that have yet to be identified.

Immediately after the bombing, Consul General Ricciuti met with the Secretary of Justice Elias Jassan. Dr. Jassan is in charge of the day to day operations of the Justice Ministry, which has responsibility over the judicial autopsies required by Argentine law. He assured Consul General Ricciuti that he had ordered that the required autopsies be done in the most dignified manner possible, and as expeditiously as possible.

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This embassy has also been in regular contact with leaders of the Argentine Jewish community. While they have expressed some concerns about the conduct of the investigation into the July 18 bombing, they have not raised with us, or to our knowledge with the press, the issue of possible violations of the canons of the Jewish faith due to the performance of these legally required autopsies.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if we may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

William J. Brencick
Political Counselor